

# FREEDOM

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## THEY'VE WON!

### No surprises as capitalism scores a massive victory in the 2010 elections

Between *Freedom* going to press and the time it hits the streets, the results of the UK general election with have been decided and a new government will have been formed.

Without wishing to pre-empt the voting intentions of the electorate, we can safely say it will either be a clear Tory or Labour victory, which for generations has been the familiar, and never positive, result.

Alternatively and certainly more intriguingly, at least in terms of future legislation is concerned, there could be a hung Parliament where neither of the two leading parties has an overall majority in the House of Commons. This is a rare occurrence for a country whose political system based on 'first passed the post' and as such defines very differently how Parliament will conduct its business.

For the political commentators and professional government watchers, party hacks and civil servant bureaucrats there will be a certain degree of interest and trepidation as unfamiliar territory is explored, for the rest of us it will be four more years of general social hostility and economic hardship as power

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### LENS CAP STORM BREWING OVER PARLIAMENT



Tony Blair, Peter Mandelson and Gordon Brown, the three New Labour standard bearers of the past thirteen years in power, are given a suitable ending by Mayday protestors in Parliament Square as part of the Election Meltdown demonstration.

photo courtesy of Maqui, Indymedia

## IWW JOIN FORCES WITH CLEANERS

Around 70 trade unionists and socialists rallied to support sacked cleaner Alberto Durango this St Georges day. Alberto is now the final larger-than-life figure left standing in the battle between multinational bank UBS and the people it paid poverty wages to clean its offices. The 'Justice For Cleaners' campaign was originally supported by Unite, and this fierce organising drive by the largely Latin workforce has finally resulted in pay increases up to the London Living Wage (£7.50 ph) – but left Durango without work.

Durango was first moved building, then 'let go' in a blatant case of unfair dismissal for organising a union. Unite increasingly backed away from the campaign, and this year have been trying to kill it off – refusing Alberto a union lawyer at his tribunal, and painting him

as an extremist to his ex-colleagues; despite this, some have fought on, with support coming from the ad-hoc 'cleaners defence committee' rather than Unite. CDC are made up of activists including anarchists and the Latin American Workers Association (LAWAs), and have been responsible for a string of rowdy demo's at UBS in Liverpool Street to keep the pressure up.

However, the campaign has returned to a union focus, through a thoroughly different kind of union: Durango is now a member of the radical syndicalist IWW and hopes to organise within its newly founded Cleaners Branch. This is seriously big news for the libertarian movement who have championed the British IWW this far and a huge opportunity for London's radical movement.

IWW correspondent

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## NEWS

## IN BRIEF

**SEA ICE:** As ever we keep monitoring the state of Arctic sea ice as a barometer of climate change.

The ever-reliable Cryoshore Today website has the total extent on 2nd May as 12.278 million square kilometres compared to the average over the last 30 years of 12.73 million.

That may seem to be not a great difference, a mere 3.55% less if you're mathematically minded. However when we convert it into the universal scientific unit of surface area measurement – Wales – we discover that there are now 21.75 Wales's of water where there would normally be ice.

**WAR:** Also an update after missing out an issue for the election special. We find that the invaders, sorry coalition forces, have suffered their lowest casualties for any month this year in Afghanistan. However that is much to do with the climate and the 34 dead last month contrasts with 14 in April 2009.

We can expect the situation to only get worse for the people of Afghanistan on whose casualties reliable numbers are lacking.

**EYJAFJALLAJÖKULL:** What a great word! But on to more important volcano-based news, Eyjafjallajökull is likely to trigger an eruption later this year by the more boringly named but much bigger Katla volcano.

*Freedom* is busy commissioning its science department for an in-depth article surveying the implications for proletarian struggle in the northern hemisphere – watch this space.

**GREEN:** Just five minutes of exercise in a 'green space' such as a park can boost mental health, researchers claim.

There is growing evidence that combining activities such as walking or cycling with nature boosts well-being.

In the latest analysis, UK researchers looked at evidence from 1,250 people in 10 studies and found fast improvements in mood and self-esteem. So, off to the park then

**PREDICTION:** As this issue comes out just after the election but is written before it, we thought we'd have a guess at how many MP's the parties get so that you can all have a really good laugh at how stupid the editors of *Freedom* are and wonder why someone with some political nous isn't put in charge of the paper.

So, just for the hell of it, we say Labour 277, Tories 266 and Lib Dems 78. If we are anywhere near right on this then one the editors will predict the winner of the Derby in the next issue and lead an expedition to Epsom Downs on 5th June to fleece the bookies and boost revolutionary funds... maybe.

# The prison 'retox' programme

## The non-scandal of 'state-sponsored drug dealing'

Home Office research has shown that the risk of death amongst ex-prisoners during their first week of freedom is 40 times higher than the general population. This is believed to be largely down to drug-related deaths, people hitting the streets with a lowered tolerance and going back to using the amount of drugs they were previously used to. Of course we are talking about things like heroin and crack here, not the previous drug of choice in UK prisons, cannabis. The reason why cons plumped for dope was because it chilled you out and made the interminable hours banged up in your cell seem much shorter. Plus, of course, there was the whole social thing of getting stoned together and laughing insanely at the same apparently unfunny situations, a definite icebreaker in a situation where the tensions of close confinement with loads of unfamiliar faces and general clashes of personality could result in serious consequences.

Then came the introduction of (not-so) voluntary and mandatory drug testing regimes (VDT and MDT) and, because of the happenstance of heroin passing through the body much faster than cannabis and therefore being less likely to be detected, smack became the prisoners' drug of choice. This move towards heroin use was also assisted by a number of other factors: the fact that smack was weigh-for-weight more valuable than the dope it replaced; the increasing crackdowns on drugs being smuggled into prisons by visitors and the resulting scarcity inside prison walls, which in turn allowed the trade to be cornered by the more ruthless prisoners, massively increasing drug-related 'taxing', bullying and violence.

The end result helped speed a parallel breakdown in general prisoner solidarity that occurred post-Woolf and with the ensuing introduction of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme. That, and the increase in the number of people going into prison straight and coming out fully fledged junkies, together with the high number of prisoners already on methadone replacement programmes entering prison and being kept on a maintenance dose and the stark absence of coherent treatment programmes across the prison estate, have all resulted in widespread confusion amongst prisons and prisoner advocates alike about how to tackle the prisons' 'drugs problem'.

For most of the past decade, the Scottish Prison Service has been operating a 're-toxification' programme for selected prisoners using methadone to try and reduce the numbers of drug-related deaths amongst newly released prisoners. This has operated against a background where 55% of people

entering prisons in the UK are generally classed as problematic drug users, where 69% of prisoners in Scottish prisons admit to having used drugs in the 12 months previous to being imprisoned and where a 2008 survey found that 28% of serving prisoners admitted having used drugs in the previous month.

On this 'retox' programme, prisoners facing release and thought to be likely to return to heroin use are assessed by psychologists and drug counsellors and, if it is decided that there is a strong possibility of renewed heroin use, the soon-to-be-prisoner is offered a place on the voluntary programme tailored to their previous history of drug use.

When news of this programme 'leaked' out in 2002 it caused a certain amount of outrage amongst politicians playing to the gallery, but was quickly forgotten as in practice it proved less than controversial. Now the *Sun*, with its usual flair for creating a reactionary mountain out of a very small liberal molehill, has splashed news of the English and Welsh version of the scheme across its pages, in what it claims is an exclusive. Under the headline 'Jails put lags back on drugs', replete with the de rigueur posed photo depicting the 'reality' behind the story, this one of a baseball-capped chav quaffing a small container of green liquid (could be Absinthe).

The article declares: "Our fight for the truth... The *Sun* was tipped off by a senior police source – but repeatedly given the runaround by the justice Ministry and Health Department.

"Civil servants blocked us at every turn. Finally we hit England's 145 Primary Care Trusts with a Freedom of Information request. The secret was out.

"Drug-free cons are secretly being turned back into junkies by prison medics before going free – with the Government's blessing. The controversial treatment – called 'retoxification' – has seen more than 460 lags released across England hooked on drugs such as heroin substitute methadone. Amazingly the campaign – trumpeted as for their own benefit – has been going on for five years."

So in reality, that's 92 prisoners a year amongst a prisoner population of 84,000, or 0.1% of the prison population. And if one considers the 135,000 or so people that in fact enter prison in England and Wales each year, its only 0.07%. Given how few prisoners that actually is and the cost of a few weeks of methadone for each of these prisoner, it hardly comes out at much of a cost to the tax payers the *Sun* appears to be worry about. But then again, given the tabloid press's general hostility to prisoners, the *Sun* would rather have dead prisoners littering the streets than anything humane like a rational policy of 'state-sponsored drug dealing'.

Bra  
Brighton Anarchist Black Cross





Blair Peach was killed during a demonstration against the National Front in Southall, West London, in 1979

# Blair Peach killed by police

**Police finally acknowledge their part in the killing of an anti-fascist demonstrator 31 years ago**

The Metropolitan Police have for the first time admitted that they were responsible for the death of a protestor during an anti-fascist demonstration in Southall, West London 31 years ago.

The Met came clean and made public its own internal inquiry into the incident relating to the death of the New Zealand born school teacher Blair Peach, aged 33, the last person to be killed by police on a demonstration until Ian Tomlinson at last year's G20 protests.

Peach, an active anti-racist campaigner and socialist, was part of a 3,000 strong crowd protesting against the National Front's Saint

George's Day election meeting in the largely Asian area of Southall on 23rd April 1979.

Peach was knocked unconscious by a blow to the head from a unit of the notorious Special Patrol Group (SPG) – the Met's riot squad – and died in hospital a day later. No-one was ever charged with the killing despite 14 separate witnesses stating they had seen “a police officer hit the deceased on the head”.

The internal report was commissioned by the police at the time but was not made public. Only now are the family aware of the full extent to which the police went to cover up the killing – from doctored statements to outright lies. The 130-page report, produced by Commander John Cass who ran the Met's internal complaints bureau, concluded that Peach was “almost certainly” killed by one of six SPG officers, some of whom then lied to cover up the actions of their colleague.

The report then went on to “strongly recommend” that three officers should be charged with conspiracy to pervert the course

of justice, giving detailed evidence to show how they were engaged in a “deliberate attempt to conceal the presence of the carrier at the scene at that time”. None were ever charged.

When SPG headquarters were searched as part of the investigation, it was discovered one officer had Nazi regalia, bayonets and leather-covered sticks in his locker. Also uncovered was an array of unauthorised weaponry including illegal truncheons and knives, two crowbars, a whip and a 3ft wooden staff. An officer was discovered attempting to dispose of a metal cosh, although not the weapon that killed Peach. One officer refused to participate in an identity parade and all the police officers' uniforms had been dry cleaned before they were to be inspected.

Peach was eventually buried two months later On 13th June 1979. Ten thousand people joined the procession. Another ten thousand marched through Southall again in his memory the following year.

## They've won

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formations seek to establish a governing ideology with which to tax us more, cut jobs, wages and benefits in order to repay the national debt that has been accumulating over the years.

As the *Financial Times* warned just prior to the election: “The next government will have to cut public sector pay, freeze benefits, slash jobs, abolish a range of welfare entitlements and take the axe to programmes such as school building and road maintenance” and added that “packages of measures such as these are already under consideration in the Treasury and will be needed if further big tax rises are to be avoided as the next

chancellor seeks, at a minimum, to halve the deficit by 2014 – a goal to which all the main parties are signed up”.

This then becomes the clear path the next government, of whatever hue, in whatever percentage share of the seats, will seek to push through. The choices that the next chancellor will face show that almost the whole population would be hit as the new government makes £30bn to £40bn of cuts in real terms to halve the deficit.

It is a cliché, but one that remains as true as ever; whichever party we vote for the government always wins, and so does capitalism, which will ultimately dictates the terms of

and conditions of our economic future. The role of government is to provide a secure environment for capitalism to continue to flourish. The stock markets may stutter the day after the election results but the business of business remains resolutely tied to government's stated aims.

As a nation wakes on Friday morning to the news of unfolding results and new names and faces are brought forward to speak about the hard task ahead, the only clear winner will be capitalism and the privileged and wealthy minority who benefit from such a system. The rest of us have another four year long hang-over to look forward to.



## NEWS

# Universities forced to spy on students

**New legislation is a step further in criminalising overseas students**

Gordon Brown has come under fire from a coalition of universities for sweeping immigration changes affecting foreign (non-EU) students and the universities they study at.

The new rules were announced only two weeks before coming into effect on 6th April, the day Brown officially announced general elections.

Universities must now monitor their foreign students, report more than three days 'unauthorised non attendance' to the UK Border Authority (UKBA), carry out identity checks and comply with all UKBA requests for information on foreign students' activity.

Universities have until 30th June to apply for a Highly Trusted Sponsor licence, ensuring that all university staff abide with the 21 pages of requirements dictated by the Home Office.

Non-compliance or dissent will strip the university of their ability to enroll non-EU students. Universities must guarantee that non-EU students pass their degrees, contributing further to foreign students as second class citizens on campus: they are not allowed to fail, switch degrees without permission from the Home Office (this is a criminal offence) and must not break the rules.

These draconian controls were passed outside of the normal process of debate and consultation within Parliament. Even our rulers are shocked at the powers Brown has permitted the Home Office to exercise.

Lord Avebury demanded that New Labour, if re-elected "never again try to push through



material changes to the immigration rules affecting people and institutions without any of the safeguards that exist to ensure informed parliamentary scrutiny and to prevent flawed legislation". However, wagging his lordly finger does nothing to help foreign students who now face omnipresent government surveillance, or reign in the Home Office's increasing control over people's lives.

Responding to criticism that the new rules were illegally brought into effect, Lord West, parliamentary under-secretary of state in the Home Office, replied that "given concerns about the security of immigration control, it was decided that it was not appropriate to conduct a formal written consultation".

Once again our rulers use the rhetoric of fear and security as means to consolidate their power.

Traditionally, students can be a force of radical dissent against authority, and foreign students are increasingly unable to take part in political activities under these fascistic rules. The burden of administering the Home Office's bidding has dramatically shifted from the bureaucrats and police they employ to university staff and lecturers. We must resist this, as there is no guarantee that forced citizen surveillance will stop at universities, or that those monitored will only be the vulnerable foreigners with little redress.

## BNP manifesto launch misfires

The BNP have something of a stronghold in Stoke and Barking, with a sizeable number of councillors in both. So the choice of Croydon to launch their election manifesto was all about expansion, showing the denizens of the South East that they too had earned the attention of Britain's rejuvenated radical Right. Unfortunately for them, rather stick to the dingy pub they decided an open air picket of Croydon Migration Services would be the best launch pad. American, Armenian, Arab alike, asylum seeker, holiday visa seeker, lunch break sandwich seeker – all would be told 'Don't unpack – you'll soon be going back! BNP'.

Public service workers, organised by PCS, attempted to ban the rally on the grounds it would be both harassment and on government property, but their request was denied, so a counter-demo was called.

The PCS rally was dignified affair, but not so after the arrival of the UAF and their disempowering, embarrassing chanting of 'Nazi scum, off our streets'. If you believe somebody to be a Nazi, and you are incensed enough to call them scum, then you shouldn't be standing behind a barrier.

A group of local libertarian lasses and lads decided to skip the counter-demo and let the BNP know what they thought of their return to the streets. In the ensuing chaos banners fell, flags flew no more and a manifesto launch was wrecked.

The launch would happen quietly a week later in Stoke. There has been some controversy over the action, with some believing the police's line that a group of 15 or more thugs in black clothing, black shades and black masks tore into the BNP and ruined what would have been a 'legitimate protest' by the PCS.

Firstly, all pictures show the locals who got involved to be normally attired and far less weird than the UAF chantalong.

Secondly, the two rallies were equally legitimate in the eyes of the law, but the BNP would have got the press: trade unionists standing in a pen are not a front page story.

No violence was used either – all that the footage shows is a worried BNP backing away from an angry group and the police going mental. The difference was that instead of standing 100m away behind a pen, the group was standing in front of the BNP.

Whether antifascism as a specific activity is worthwhile today is a discussion the libertarian left is currently having; what cannot be doubted on this occasion however, is that antifascism was delivered.

Anti-fascist



## ANARCHA-FREEDOM

Welcome to the first of what will hopefully become a regular feature in *Freedom*: from an anarcha-feminist perspective. We're aware that many of the issues we spend our time and energy discussing (and taking action about) don't make it into the anarchist mainstream, and that unless we make the effort to share this information, our struggles may remain invisible. We welcome your thoughts and feedback

## Birth – everyone's business

Are you alive? Then you were born. The way in which you were born affected your immediate chances of survival, the kind of nourishment you would come to receive and your potential for intelligence, growth, health, emotional development and social adjustment. It helped set the relationships you would have with your parents, by either encouraging or preventing their ability to positively bond with you. It was monumentally important in your life – but you probably won't remember it.

Your mother will. Her experience is likely to have had a profound effect on her. Was it good? Did she feel free, empowered and in control amongst people she loved and trusted? If she did, she was fortunate and more likely to be able to love, care for and breastfeed you thus setting you up for a lifetime of good health and well-being outcomes – providing resilience to the physical, emotional and social challenges of life.

Was your father there? Did he welcome you into the world? Did he feel involved and know his child from the outset? Did he accept you into his heart as his own to love and protect regardless of how life and relationships would progress? Were other parents, family members, friends and communities supported and supportive? Were you all as a family welcomed, provided and cared for in the world? Were you as a baby given the chance to thrive? Because it affected you for life.

Perhaps you have or want children of your own? Perhaps it will happen unexpectedly. Or maybe you hope for a different, better society, or a revolution? For the human race to continue in any form, from utopian to post-apocalyptic, babies will need to be born, parents will need to care for them and communities will need to raise them. How it's done isn't just important; it's integral, and its effects are infinitely wide ranging. It matters, to you, to me, to everyone.

None of us can afford to forget about childbirth, but that's easily done when we don't remember it happening to us, and the event itself is hidden away in special secret places, which often provide difficult, negative and traumatic experiences. Let's stop sidelining this as a women's issue, a health issue or identity politics. It's huge, it's vital and we should all be taking an interest and a responsibility for the coming generations.

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# Days like these

Given that this year's Mayday fell on the same week as the most unpredictable and unsecured of general elections in living memory, where politics were high on everyone's agenda, anarchist fundamentals should have been beating out like tribal drums, fearlessly and incessantly, across the political landscape.

It's clear from the recent MP's expenses episode and 'MPs for sale' media scandal, that politicians are being outed for what they are – greedy, lying, self-serving careerists, something reinforced by research conducted just prior to the election that rated politicians the least trusted profession amongst people in the UK. This then should have been a fertile opportunity for the anarchist movement to capitalise on the growing mistrust, contempt and disillusion felt for our elected public servants.

And yet, with a few notable and honourable exceptions (featured elsewhere in this issue of *Freedom*), Mayday passed without a murmur from most political activists, while the trajectory of electioneering remained predictably sterile, where anarchists were neither vocal nor visible, active or organised, failing to play even a minor (never mind alternative) part in the discourse.

The Haymarket anarchists, who are the reason we still celebrate Mayday as part of a living anarchist history, understood the notion of creating a visible presence as part of the agitational process. As Paul Avrich noted in his book on the Chicago anarchists: "Demonstrations like these were a peculiar feature of the agitation in Chicago in the years before the Haymarket explosion. They were designed, above all, to display the strength of the movement to its opponents and at the same time to encourage its supporters with a sense of collective power.

Yet, combining entertainment with social protest, they had a festive air which belied their seriousness of purpose. With their flags and banners, their placards and posters, their mottos and slogans, their speeches and music, they brought all the devices of the counter-culture into play and provided a vivid example of how traditional social activities might be used for revolutionary purposes."

But where does this leave us, beyond muttering amongst ourselves in the shadows? And perhaps a more pertinent question is, why do we feel more at home there?

The economic and social conditions of our current situation suggests avenues opening up to new ways of thinking, new ways organising, and certainly of challenging what is currently being offered in terms of political alternatives or escape routes. Despite this the voice of the political mainstream retains its dominance, both as a solution to the current crisis and as an authority of the conditions that created it.

Of course we were able to articulate a different perspective – both the Anarchist Federation and Solidarity Federation produced competent and compelling anti-election propaganda, and Class War offered their own unique and inspired take on the nature of politicians, yet how does all this translate into affecting social change? And is anyone listening anyhow? Questions, of course, that are given an added urgency with the rise in popularity and visible presence of the far right in all its many forms.

Two questions remain: Was Mayday a missed opportunity by an anarchist movement in need of invigorating? And if we can't, as a movement, achieve recognition during such heightened political awareness and fractured social conditions, when can we achieve it?



Mayday marchers remembering the Haymarket martyrs



## INTERNATIONAL

## IN BRIEF

**BRAZIL:** Personnel of the former military government are to be protected by the state after the Supreme Federal Court found that their 'political acts' are covered by an amnesty granted in 1979. Thousands of people were imprisoned, tortured and disappeared while Brazil was ruled by a military government between 1964 and 1985.

**CUBA:** Journalists are complaining that pro-government groups are harassing them for attempting to cover the story of the Ladies in White, a group of dissidents who are campaigning against the imprisonment of their husbands. One, Calixto Arias, was jailed late last month, while others say they have faced intimidation.

**FRANCE:** One of the last sanctuaries for migrants left in Calais is facing demolition as part of the government's brutal campaign against the local population. The Africa House squat has already come under sustained pressure over the last two months, with police launching a number of raids which saw belongings stolen and chemicals sprayed to try and force the residents out. The building faces imminent destruction, according to an unnamed source, maybe as soon as 10th May.

**IRAQ:** Testimonies from a number of detainees at a Baghdad prison have suggested that torture is regularly being used by the Iraqi government against Sunni prisoners.

Hundreds of people have been put through the facility and one Iraqi official has revealed that over a hundred of these were beaten, electrocuted, suffocated and raped, according to the Human Rights Watch group.

**JAPAN:** Protesters turned out on 2nd May as part of an increasingly vocal campaign to end the US military presence on Okinawa island. Kadena airbase is the largest American facility in the Asia-Pacific region with 47,000 troops stationed there. Tensions have been stoked with the local population complaining of pollution, noise and trouble caused by US soldiers.

**SPAIN:** The economy is continuing to crash with official unemployment levels reaching one in five, according to the latest economic figures. More than 700,000 people have lost their jobs over the past year with under-25s being the worst-affected group. The country is being regarded as a possible 'new Greece' with historically high levels of debt.

**TAIWAN:** Tens of thousands of people took to the streets this month to demand an end to rising levels of casualisation at work.

Employers are not expected to pay benefits for temporary workers and in recent years both private and public services have taken advantage of the situation by taking permanent jobs off the market. Embarrassingly, it has been pointed out that over 70% of staff in the Bureau for Employment and Training had seen their jobs casualised.

## LENS CAP ATHENS



Greek police leap around as they get caught in the flames of a Molotov cocktail in Athens. Following the announcement of a new round of austerity measures in April by the government there were clashes throughout the city on May Day.

## Mayday 2010 around the world

Clashes took place around the world on Mayday 2010 over the fallout from the economic crisis.

Banking bonuses drove Swiss protesters to the streets, where they were attacked with water cannon by Zurich police.

Pepper spray and water cannons were also used in Macau, China, against demonstrators calling for more job security and an end to corruption, with 41 people injured.

In Germany police fought with demonstrators and saw injured after paving stones were hurled and rubbish cans set alight. Nine were arrested.

In Turkey, about 140,000 workers gathered in Istanbul's Taksim Square in the first celebrations there for three decades.

Thousands of Cambodian workers marked May Day by marching through the capital to demand better work conditions and the establishment of a labour court.

Philippine trade unionist also took to the streets to call on the government to protect jobs.

In the South Korean capital, Seoul, about 20,000 people gathered to demand better working conditions for labourers and farmers.

In Russia almost two million people turned out to mark international worker's day, mostly in praise of Stalin and Lenin, while demanding the government resign over job losses in Moscow.

Protests at the Erez border between Gaza and Egypt was called by left wing groups in Palestine.

One of the protests organisers, Ramzi Rabah, of the DFLP said "We call on the world to stop the siege of Gaza."

In France, an estimated 300,000 people were out to demand that President Sarkozy repeal plans to cut pensions and raise the retirement age.

## Utah's abortion shame

## Louis Further investigates a bill which classes battered women as murderers

A recent Utah state Bill – if approved – would allow women to be charged with murder if they should commit an 'intentional, knowing or reckless act' causing a miscarriage. The anti-choice lobby obviously has specific cases

in mind. Among these are times when – for one reason or another – a woman stays with an abusive partner, a 'batterer'.

Lynn Paltrow, founder and executive director of National Advocates for Pregnant Women, explains: "the way the statute is written, any action a woman undertakes, knowingly or recklessly, can result in a charge of homicide with a penalty of 15 years. So a woman who is pregnant and stays with her batterer is arguably being



# Mexican state abandons the weak

## Thousands of migrants dying and paramilitaries on rise as Calderon wobbles

Mexico's government has come under fire for being unable to provide even minimal protections for vulnerable people following a series of damning reports and incidents around the country.

Foremost is a report released at the end of last month which suggests that the Calderon administration, which has ploughed huge sums of money into its largely unsuccessful war on drugs, has been turning a blind eye to people-trafficking which is seeing the abuse of thousands of people every year.

The drugs war has dominated internal politics in the region, which is in the midst of a painful recession which has prompted a surge in killings – up to 2,800 people have died in the last four months. However the focus on this conflict has hidden a trafficking problem which is only now beginning to come to light, researchers say.

*Invisible Victims: Migrants on the Move in Mexico*, which documents the movement of tens of thousands of people across the country, suggests that endemic corruption and a culture of turning a blind eye has led to “a major human rights crisis”.

Among the more alarming figures in the report is its estimate that six in ten migrant women and girls experience sexual violence during their journey, with people smugglers allegedly making them take contraceptive injections to prevent pregnancy as a result.

## Utah's abortion shame

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reckless in staying there. She could literally be charged with attempted feticide or murder, if... she survives and the foetus doesn't.”

Of course, if a woman is afraid that she might not get health insurance, she'll be less likely to report the violence in her case. Terry O'Neill, President of the National Organization for Women, says: “There are communities where even if there is a shelter, that shelter is full for six months. So she needs to find... the money, to move out, to find the apartment. She needs to be able to get to a place where he can't find her. She needs to be able to go through the legal process to get the restraining order and the permission, in many states.

“Women who are being battered are not permitted to move to a safer place if it requires her to cross a state line, because he has a legal right to have access to the children. So if she lives, for instance, in Louisiana, as a case I'm familiar with, and her parents in



A rally against the attack on the international aid caravan was held in Mexico City on 28th April 2010 after news that comrades were killed and wounded by paramilitaries.

Almost 10,000 people were abducted in just six months over 2009, which public officials were allegedly involved in around half of the time – and poor, even nonexistent reporting of such activities from the state means the true figures could be higher.

Police collusion is particularly problematic, according to the report, as not only do migrants get handed over to gangs such as the Zetas traffickers, they then cannot escape and anyone risking helping them is placed in potential danger.

Meanwhile pro-government paramilitaries have been actively stepping up intimidation and attacks on communities which have attempted to free themselves from state

interference in the southern state of Oaxaca.

On 25th April an international aid caravan was ambushed en route to San Juan Copala by forces loyal to state governor Uiles Ruiz Ortiz. At least two people are reported dead. In addition to carrying much-needed supplies, the caravan was meant to accompany teachers who were returning to classes after paramilitaries denied them access to the community nearly five months ago.

San Juan Copala has been under constant siege from pro-government paramilitaries since it declared itself autonomous following the 2006 peaceful uprising that shook the state and nearly drove the governor out of office.

## Italian pharmacists may refuse to supply contraception

A new Bill is being lodged in the Italian senate which would allow pharmacists to declare they will not provide contraception medicines on the grounds of ‘conscientious objection’.

Senior Catholic PDL Spadoni Urbani said: “I am not a doctor, I studied physics, but mine is a secular law which just wants to give pharmacists the same rights as doctors and nurses have over abortions.”

The legal right to refuse abortion is controversial in Italy, as the practice is now widespread from doctors who have been relentlessly intimidated by the powerful anti-abortion lobby and who can face losing their careers if they carry out such work.

Urbani claims that the Morning After pill in particular must be covered as an ‘abortion pill’ by her legislation.

However she has shown no evidence why it should be regarded as such and admits it is regarded as a contraceptive by almost all world health bodies.

Arkansas said, ‘Come move in with us.’ Oh, no... that was not an option for her.”

Paltrow puts the legislation in Utah in broader context: “The Utah law was ostensibly passed in response to a particular event. This involved a 17-year-old girl who was pregnant, whose boyfriend told her he would leave her if she continued to term. And in some act of absolute desperation, she apparently hired somebody to beat her up to cause her to lose the pregnancy.

She survived. The baby survived. They arrested both the young man who beat her up and the young woman. The young man was charged with attempted feticide, and so was she. But when they realised that they really couldn't apply the attempted feticide law to the girl herself, so outraged were they that they couldn't lock up a 17-year-old for 15 or more years, that they passed a law that purports to outlaw self-abortions.

Utah is not alone, though. In other states similar measures either exist, or are pending.



## FEATURE

# Under the Volcano

**Freedom takes a look at the airline industry's response to the recent volcano eruption in Iceland and questions the economic motivations behind it**

Within the past week, increasingly serious concerns have been raised over the motivations that reopened UK airspace to commercial flights after Eyjafjallajökull's ongoing eruption spewed a cloud of fine volcanic ash 7500m above Europe. For commercial airlines, strapping hundreds of passengers into a pressurised aluminium tube hurtling 900km/h through the stratosphere is big money, and in recent weeks the traditional checks and balances that limited airline negligence in the pursuit of profit have given way to maintain an already unsustainable transport economy reliant on air travel. Aircraft had previously been banned from travelling through any level of volcanic ash for safety reasons. However airline bosses had the rules rewritten to suit their needs after six days of grounded aircraft wiped nearly £2 billion off their balance sheets. What had once threatened to drop planes from the sky is suddenly perfectly safe, and those in power are counting their money again. How did this happen?

Iceland's sub-glacial volcano Eyjafjallajökull (the BBC provides a pronunciation as AY-uh-fyat-luh-YOE-kuutl-uh) rumbled back to life in December 2009 with telltale earthquakes and terrain distortion as magma rose to the surface. In late March Eyjafjallajökull modestly erupted, with a Volcanic Explosivity Index of 1 (out of 7, 7 being the dormant super-volcanos in the western USA). This initial fissure eruption on the side of the mountain was quieter than anticipated, 500 residents evacuated and Icelandic airspace closed for a day. The low volume, yet visually dramatic, lava flow quickly became a tourist attraction as roads were reopened. However the second

eruption in mid-April – this time from the main crater – was 20 times greater, rating 4 on the Volcanic Explosivity Index. Melted glacial ice floods wiped away the reopened roads, 800 locals were evacuated, and an electrified column of steam and ash rose kilometres above the mountain.

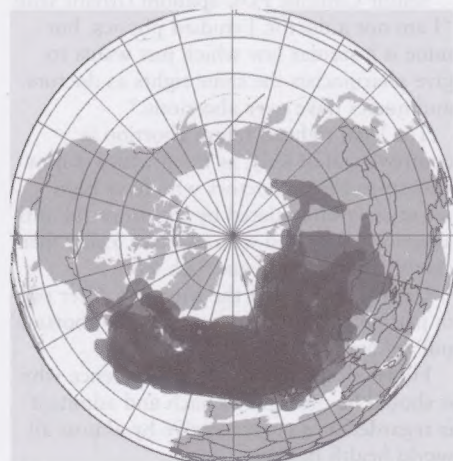
Volcanic ash differs from the domestic dust that accumulates on mantles and shelves. The fine ash clogging European airspace is less than 0.063 mm in diameter, microscopic particles of basalt rock and silica that hover in the air for months or years before falling to earth. These tiny bits of rock once ejected high enough into the atmosphere, travel thousands of miles on the wind. Eyjafjallajökull's ash plume settled in the same altitudes jets manoeuvre before landing and after take off, shutting down UK and EU airspace by 15th April.

Aircraft manufacturers are quite specific that ash is an extreme hazard to aircraft. The speed and air intake of airliners while going through an ash cloud can damage planes a number of ways: the dense ash can effectively sandblast the windscreen, 'blinding' the pilots. Fine particles can accumulate and clog the sensors; most vulnerable are the pilot tubes containing the airspeed indicator. The fuselage of the plane is also subject to the sandblasting effect, potentially weakening the aircraft. Oil can become contaminated. Landing lights fogged. Most problematic is the immense air intake of jet engines, and the extraordinary number of ash particles that get sucked into them. Ash contains large amounts of silica, which fuse to hot engine parts as tiny blobs of glass. The congealed engines overheat and burn out, as happened in 1982 when all four engines of a Boeing 747 simultaneously failed after hitting a cloud of volcanic ash erupting from Mount Galunggung in Indonesia. The pilot was able to restart them after the plane plunged to 3600m. A near-identical incident occurred in 1989 over a volcano in Alaska. In fact, Boeing (manufacturer of aircraft and engines) reports that in the past 30 years more than 90 aircraft have been damaged after encountering volcanic ash. These are accidental encounters, despite zero tolerance regulations regarding flying through ash-laden air. Contributing to the peril is the invisibility of even dense clouds of microscopic ash, pilots don't realise they've flown into an ash cloud until the instruments erratically malfunction and eerie grey dust accumulates on the nose of the plane. Or the engines all fail.

Commercial airlines constantly wrangle with the government and more scientific aviation institutions for control of Britain's overcrowded skies. Aircraft only float through the air when they are in perfect working order; seemingly trivial negligences such as tape mistakenly left on the altimeter (Aeroperú Flight 603) tragically kill everyone on board. Commercial airlines in the UK are currently



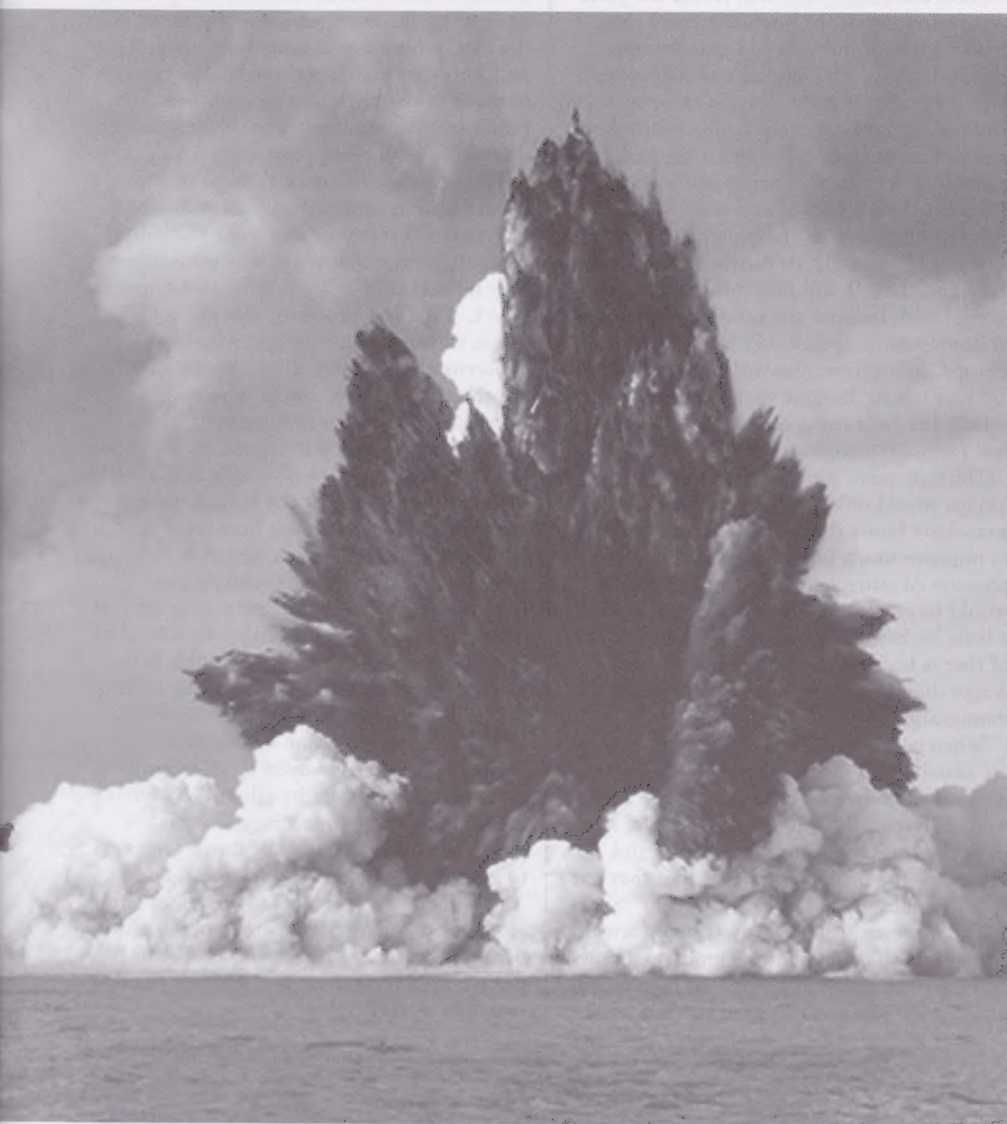
Above: Comrade Eyjafjallajökull; below left, compos



lost in a maze of cost cutting; unfair redundancies, lower paid staff, excessive charges, no customer service. Airlines are also infamous for their lack of social consciousness, limiting airport expansion and addressing carbon emissions cut into an ever-elusive profit margin. However, cost cutting can only go so far. Historically airlines have been kept somewhat in check by government regulations, the cost of plane crashes, and passengers' fear of sudden fiery death.

Up until Eyjafjallajökull's amply predicted eruption, passengers were assured that while airlines may cut baggage, meals, and padded seats; elected officials would ensure that 'the skies are safe'. Not surprisingly, these policies focused not on airlines but on controlling the passengers, manifested in increasingly invasive 'security' measures, rapidly eroding individual rights both in and outside of airports. Airlines are incentivised to keep their planes compliant with maintenance regulations, not necessarily to avert a loss of human life;





Map of the ash plume spanning 14th to 25th April

crashes are fantastically expensive. The initial search for remains of Air France flight 447, which mysteriously crashed in the Pacific last July killing all aboard, cost £34 million and many times that has been spent on ongoing legal fees. Of greater worry to airlines is the psychological impact plane crashes have on consumers. Airlines put on a face of utmost concern for safety as passengers who are afraid to fly cannot be monetised. Of course, what airlines truly care about is money: an explanation of Air France 447's catastrophic crash was never officially determined. However, Air France has been accused of using obsolete sensors that were recommended – but not mandated – for upgrade. Passengers, once on an airplane, are completely helpless when the airline decides that profit comes before people.

So what happened when siliceous volcanic ash blanketed Europe's prime airspace? How did the commercial airlines gain control of the skies in under a week? Grounding the

UK air fleet laid bare the instability of our economy grossly based on air transport. Half a million people were stranded, Kenyan crops grown for export rotted (while 1.6 million Kenyans went hungry). Hotels and trains profiteered on passengers' desperate need to find shelter and reunite with their families. Bosses panicked and politicians pointed fingers at each other. Starting with BA, KLM, easy jet and Virgin Atlantic, airlines demanded autonomous power to decide if their aircraft were safe to fly or not. And they exercised this new power by sending up test flights, and widely disseminating in the media that results from these tests proved the ash presented no threat. These dubious tests – commercial aircraft have no sensors for volcanic ash – hardly count as thorough scientific enquiry. A few days of randomly sampling flights is simply not enough when hard evidence points to past damage and near crashes due to ash.

Very few standard air safety tests were done in the aftermath of Eyjafjallajökull: the

industry declined to do wind tunnel analyses and Rolls Royce (a manufacturer of airline engines) refuses to specify what, if any, testing is being done to determine how much ash their engines can intake before flaming out. The airlines are wilfully ignorant; a safe ash level was never established so there could never be direct liability for a plane going down. "There must be some level [of ash] that can be considered safe, but if you do let planes fly through ash clouds, who takes responsibility the first time all the engines fail on a plane and everybody dies?" noted Riti Singh, an authority on aircraft engines. Ash plumes are extraordinarily difficult to track, the commercial flights zig-zagging overhead are being guided by infrared satellite sampling of the air that is only accurate within 5–8km, and while the densest plumes have now drifted towards Canada, Eyjafjallajökull is still erupting.

Our government and corporate rulers realised that the financial incentives to maintain the lowest possible probability of aircraft dropping out of the sky were weighted against economic haemorrhaging from grounding the fleet. Even the psychological fear of plane crashes was overwhelmed by the intangibility of the ash cloud (it was sunny in London), the media optimism surrounding the test flights, and the distress of stranded passengers. Politicians vying for election or re-election pointed fingers and resolved to solve the crisis acutely rather than systemically: get the planes in the air. Labour is only responsible for another month, and whoever succeeds Brown (unless Brown wins) doesn't have responsibility for the initial decision. However cynicism and criticism is mounting, as passengers are beginning to realise that they are flying but other types of aircraft – including the Royal Air Force fleet – are not. How many times can the airlines be bailed out, and at what financial and human cost? Of course, planes haven't dropped out of the sky since 22nd April when UK airspace was reopened, and hopefully none will, but the long term damage to aircraft and the victory of corporate rule should not be underestimated.

From an anarchist perspective, the problem of Eyjafjallajökull has nothing to do with ash, aircraft, engine mechanics, or silica. It's systemic corruption and disregard for human life here on the ground. Over-reliance on an ecologically and financially unsustainable air industry coupled with underdevelopment of affordable forms of ground transportation such as trains. Expensive imported crops that are should feed the populations that grow them. Stronger government regulation isn't the solution; regulations that are thrown aside when deemed financially inconvenient are worthless, charades of public interest. The problem is with short-term profit chasing and Capitalism itself, rather than the conflicting mechanisms of airplanes and volcanoes.



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

This is written as Lee, our new Sunday volunteer, clears up the mess from our Mayday Social last night.

Thanks are also due to our comrades in The Anarchist Federation and Solidarity Federation for providing the food, refreshments and entertainment for the evening. No thanks at all to the so-called comrades who put 10 Hungarian Florints and 15 Ecuadorian Centavos in the donation box.

Still the action doesn't stop there and I'm waffling away to fill the column quickly so I can get over to Altab Ali Park for 2pm where Whitechapel Anarchist Group are holding a rally to commemorate Altab Ali's murder by racists in 1978.

Later this evening we welcome Feminist Fightback who are having a social in the bookshop.

Sharp-eared readers may have noticed that Andy managed to worm his way onto Ian Bone's Resonance Radio election 'Captain Swingometer' show on 28th April and you can judge the performance for yourself, just follow the link on Ian's web blog.

We are having a big clear-up day on Monday 10th May to get the Autonomy Club into a decent state for our long planned art exhibition and to sort through the hundreds of boxes of books so we can have proper access to our stock. Anyone interested in helping out can turn up from 12 noon and they will be much appreciated.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

To work out if your subscription is due for renewal, look at the number above your name on the address label. This issue is vol 71, no 09, so if the number is 7109 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. See page 16 for a renewal form or [freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe](http://freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe).

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 22nd May 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 13th May. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

When future historians look back at the 2010 election campaign, they will revisit the gaffe by Gordon Brown in Rochdale every time. Brown spoke to 66 year old grandmother Gillian Duffy, a lifelong Labour supporter. After an exchange on several issues, Brown got into his car and, not realising his microphone was still turned on, called her a bigoted woman. After this was made public, he abandoned his schedule and went back to visit her in person to apologise.

While this is a gift to Brown's enemies on the right, the left will find it more difficult to deal with because she raised the question of immigration, specifically from Eastern Europe. In my view, the worst thing Brown did was not to disagree with her, but to belittle her for raising issues that are very real for many people.

Thirteen years ago Labour promised that 'things would only get better'. While most anarchists know that politicians are unlikely to improve much unless driven to by the pressure of struggle, most working people would have expected their lot to get at least a little bit better. By and large it hasn't. Part of that is because during the boom times, wages didn't increase, in part because of immigration.

When people talk about immigration, there are usually two themes they talk about. One is that people from a different culture are, well, different; the other is the pressure it has on resources. Both of these are valid subjects – the problem for us is that they get easily racialised.

The resource issue is fairly straightforward and affects all communities – funds are limited and are often spent in a way that favours one group over another. Plans for services are

usually set years in advance, often based on the census, which is out of date and was probably ignored by the most recent immigrants. So the local school expects thirty children to join and forty-five come, because there's been an increase in the birth rate. Ten of them are Polish, so the immigrants get blamed, rather than more cash being requested.

The cultural difference element of it should also be straightforward. It doesn't matter much if people don't like the culture of immigrants, what matters is what actions they take. Grumbling will pass, racist attacks won't. What is a problem, though, is to refuse to engage with people who hold concerns about immigration, because there are some right nasty outfits who will.

Perhaps one of the first areas to tackle is the mythology around immigration. Whenever you hear the myths, they usually begin with the mantra of 'they get the houses, the benefits, the free television licences...' and so on (and the free television licence was from someone interviewed in Rochdale after Brown's gaffe). Most of these myths are just that – from the Richard Littlejohn school of investigative journalism. The trouble is that when the statistics give the lie to the myths, the believers refuse to accept the statistics.

The super-exploitation of migrants, particularly undocumented ones, relies on these myths. It is only by all workers having the same rights that unscrupulous bosses won't be able to use the UK Border Agency to get rid of workers who try to organise. And perhaps we also need to see that migrant workers are not just deserving of our solidarity because they are at the bottom of the heap, but we need their drive and abilities in our struggles as well.





## On the NHS

Thank you for the article on 'Anarchism and the National Health Service' (27th March). One small correction, more likely to be of a literal error in typesetting than a historical error. The Health Minister who introduced the NHS was not (Ernest) Bevin, who was Foreign Secretary in the Attlee government, but (Aneurin) Bevan. Among those who opposed the NHS at its foundation were the doctors' union the BMA, and British xenophobes who objected to "astute foreigners" being treated on the NHS (although it was cheaper to treat all comers than it would have been to employ a bureaucracy weeding the foreigners out). Bevan, an egalitarian socialist, resigned a few months later, when a one shilling (5p) charge was levied on patients supplied with false teeth and glasses.

The NHS always needed administrators to keep records and calculate costs, but decisions were made by clinical staff until managers (business bosses) were introduced by the Thatcher government. I see that during 2009, NHS staff increased throughout the service: 6% more hospital doctors, 2% more nurses, 12% more managers.

Donald Room

[A book of Donald Room's cartoons scripted by NHS worker 'Victoria N. Furmurry', *Health Service Wildcat*, is "dedicated to the daft doctrine that people trained in making profits can provide a better health service than people trained in caring for the sick". It may be ordered from any good bookshop (ISBN 0 900384 73 5) or post free in UK from Freedom Press, price £3.]

## John Rety

In the 1960s, I enjoyed John's company during a week-long Fast at Speaker's Corner against Vietnam war. Sadly, we did not stop the war! But I enjoyed the company of a stimulating man of bountiful humour and goodwill.

I was imprisoned in Brixton in 1963 for Ban the Bomb activities. "You're first Irishman I've met who's been locked up for pacifism, rather than pugilism!" he laughed.

A wonderful warm free spirit, remember him well.

Brendan Lynch

An obituary of John Rety appeared in *Freedom* on 27th February 2010.

## Albany midwives

The Albany Midwifery Practice provided a free service – as part of the NHS – for women around Peckham for over twelve years. As an independent group, based in the community and sub-contracted by Kings Healthcare Trust, the Albany midwives provided individual, continuous maternity care for all kinds of women, including those who are often denied proper choices by the Health Service: working-class women, women from ethnic minorities, those with mental and physical disabilities or with medical risks.

The Albany midwives aimed to provide choice, continuity and control for women, with a philosophy that pregnancy and birth are a normal part of women's lives, not a medical problem. They would provide information and let women make their own decisions, about their maternity care and the birth itself. They believed that women deserved continuity, so guaranteed access to the same pair of midwives throughout pregnancy, giving them a chance to develop a mutually-respectful, trusting, relationship with each woman before she gave birth.

This type of care is understandably popular with women, and has been proven to result in lower rates of infant mortality, lower rates of caesarian section (less than half the national average), and also much higher rates of home-birth and breastfeeding. 74% of the women using the Albany decided they didn't need pain relief during labour.

This quality of care is rarely available on the NHS. Although there are some other group practices which operate in a similar way to the Albany midwives, in many areas women have to pay privately if they want this kind of maternity care, which puts it beyond the means of most.

In December 2009, Kings Healthcare Trust abruptly terminated its contract with the Albany midwives, without any consultation (either with the midwives themselves or those who used their services) or warning (even for those women about to give birth in the next few weeks).

Kings claimed that the issue was one of patient safety, as earlier on in the year a baby had died one week after being delivered by the Albany. Kings commissioned a report from the Centre for Maternal and Child Enquiries (CMACE). They claimed that babies delivered by the Albany Practice at this time had higher rates of 'Hypoxic Ischaemic Encephalopathy' (brain damage caused by lack of oxygen), than those delivered by midwives directly employed by the Trust. These figures have been contested since the outset, with various organisations, including the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), criticising the CMACE reports. Despite

requests, the full reports have still not been made public. Although Kings terminated the Albany contract on the grounds of patient safety, they then offered the same midwives jobs within the Trust's own midwifery service. All of them declined the offer.

The closure of the Albany Midwifery Practice prompted a range of protests, including a large, very vocal, very colourful march and rally in central London on Sunday 7th March. The 'Reclaiming Birth' march was called by the Albany Mums Group, both to protest the closure and to push for better, more women-centred approaches to childbirth. It was supported by the NCT, the Royal College of Midwives, the Association of Radical Midwives, Independent Midwives UK, the Alliance for Improvement in Maternity Services (AIMS) and many feminist groups.

If Kings succeed in damaging the reputation of the Albany midwives, this could have serious repercussions on a wider scale. Their model of care has long been recognised as a way of improving outcomes for mothers and babies. Most women in the UK don't get offered this level of choice, or continuity. Instead, they are only offered an obstetric-based model of care, institutionalised, with high levels of medical intervention and operative deliveries. The choice to birth at home is dependent on the availability of midwives, and unfortunately there is a shortage of midwives. Those already working in the NHS are under-paid and over-worked, and there are not enough staff to provide the quality of care women deserve, let alone set up loads of small group practices like the Albany.

Centralised, industrial-scale obstetric care may be expedient for bureaucrats, but does not allow true choice, and does not equate with a satisfying, safe and empowering birth experience. As public services suffer more cuts, our already over-stretched and under-resourced maternity services are in crisis, and ultimately this is bad news for us all.

london anarcha feminist kolektiv

For more information on the Albany Midwifery Practice, the CMACE report and the 'Reclaiming Birth' march, see [savethealbanymidwives.org.uk](http://savethealbanymidwives.org.uk).

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

By the time you read this the election will be over, even if the fallout from it may have failed to settle. There is also the possibility that court challenges against the blanket ban on prisoners voting, something already condemned by the European Court of Human Rights, may end up invalidating the whole farce. We can but hope. One thing that will be happening however is that, whoever the new 'iron fist' at the Home Office is, they and their civil servants will already be joined in battle with Number 11 over the prison's budget and the future of prison building plans in England and Wales.

In the lead-up to the election Nu Labour had the luxury of being able to declare an end to the custody licence scheme, a particular political liability where prisoners were released 18 days before their end of sentence date, which had become a major target of the Tory press. They could do this as new prison places were coming on line, easing the overcrowding that had driven the policy in the first place. As a result, within weeks the prison population had broken the 85,000-barrier.

If the Tories have won, we can thank the current economic 'crisis' for forcing them to end their hopes of out-building Nu Labour in the prison expansion stakes. However, they will continue with Jack Straw's £4.2bn plans to expand the prison population to 96,000 by 2014. These include five 1,500 place 'mini-Titans', two of which, in Wrexham and Runwell, are due to enter the planning process later this year and local campaigns have taken the opportunity of the election to up their campaigns against them. Town councillors in Basildon have already backed the No Prison in Runwell campaign to stop the old Runwell hospital site being used, local residents preferring the site be used for housing.

All these prisons will of course be built and potentially run by private consortia from the Prison Industrial Complex, but worldwide the private prison companies are facing hard times. In the States, where newly built prisons stand empty because they are unable to win state or federal contracts to house prisoners, Cornell Companies, which operates 68 prisons and secure mental health facilities, has been forced to agree a \$385m takeover by GEO Group, who will take on \$300m of Cornell's debts. Not even Obama's planned \$528m increase of the Federal Bureau of Prisons budget to almost \$7bn is going to help as nearly half of this will be swallowed up buying the empty supermax Thomson Correctional Center in Illinois to hold prisoners from Guantanamo Bay when it closes.



Left, an anarchist executioner threatens to axe Nick Griffin; right, Parliament Square.



A round up of this year's Mayday activities:

- Even with the concerted attempts of the council to stop Nottingham's annual Mayday celebrations the event went ahead anyway, at a different location to normal. Under the banner of 'It's time to fight back', hundreds came to protest about "our shoddy councils, public spending cuts, and attacks on the working class; but also protest about environmental degradation, racism, imperialism, war, climate change, police violence, persecution of asylum seekers, cruelty, closed borders, fascism, arms dealers, militarism, surveillance, the closure of much-loved facilities and a thousand and one other things that are in desperate need of change."

- No Borders Manchester organised a 'You Cannot Represent Our Diversity' anti-election bloc on the TUC May day march followed by a celebratory barbecue and Alternative Speakers Corner on Saturday 1st May in Birley Fields, Hulme, where people came together to celebrate diversity and community, and included info-stalls, local musicians and spoken word performance, urban gardening and fun and games for kids.

- Despite the cold weather, the annual May Day event in Edinburgh saw hundreds assemble for a short march then gather by the Ross Band Stand in West Princes Street Gardens to hear a variety of speeches by union leaders and anti-war peace groups, along with stalls and live music.

- Activists in Stratford-upon-Avon greeted the local Tory councillor in the town centre today to mark Mayday and oppose their policies for the rich.

Those trying to get people to vote for their party were shadowed by people with placards reading 'Hate the Poor? Vote Tory' and 'Free Balloons for Rich Kids Only', whilst the wannabe councillor's lackeys got upset as a

result of being constantly questioned about the rich holding most of the wealth.

- There was a benefit party to celebrate the newly formed branch of the IWW in Bristol and raise money for the newly formed Bristol branch and for workers defence teams. The ever popular and ever politic Spanner performed their unique brand of militant ska punk to an appreciative crowd.

- There was also a benefit night organised in Glasgow on behalf of the Zapatistas, although Glasgow Chiapas Solidarity Group pulled out of supporting the event due to issues concerning the venue's owner and his treatment of workers he employs. During the day a street party was organised on Argyle Street, featuring stalls, food, mayhem and magic.

- Traditionally London offers the biggest opportunity for anarchists to come out and create a visible presence on the streets in celebrating international workers day. Some five hundred or so anarchists were part of a bloc on the Trade Union march, which was buoyed by the presence of the Election Meltdown anti-Griffin black horse mobilisation who was starting from the same point.

The bloc itself broke away from the TUC march at Trafalgar Square and headed directly to Parliament Square to join up with the four horsemen of the apocalypse (Brown, Cameron, Clegg and Griffin) Election Meltdown carnival and People's Assembly. A festival atmosphere was added to with the 'execution' of the four party leaders and their dismembered heads paraded round the square in front of the House of Commons.

Later in the evening Freedom bookshop was a hive of activity and merriment as most of the London anarchists descended on Whitechapel to enjoy the joint Solfed and Afed social, to discuss the day's events over some well earned refreshments, ending the day with a swing.



# To those about to be doubled-crossed

The article below appeared in *Freedom* (10th October) on the eve of the 1964 General Election, where Harold Wilson's Labour Party went on to overturn the Tories' 13-year term in power by a slim majority.

A few days and the battle of words will be over, the tons of printed matter will be finding their way on to the rubbish dumps and into the pulp mills; the faces of the leaders on a thousand hoardings will be obliterated by 'Beer is Best' or 'Thinking men smoke cigars' or 'You've never had it so white' posters; the votes will have been counted, the winning candidates declared; the new government formed. For a few weeks the political analysts, wise after the event, will be trying to show how right their forecasts were, however wide of the mark they may have been, and then the country will sink back into political apathy for another five years. For whichever party wins, life for the people of this country will go on much the same as it has done these past five years, and they will have little real voice in the nation's affairs whichever party takes office. Indeed for about three months (counting the summer recess) Parliament has not been functioning, and during the past month Cabinet Ministers have been proclaiming their worth from public platforms up and down the country... and yet the machine of State works on as smoothly or as inefficiently (according to your party allegiance) as ever!

Whatever differences of objectives divide the two main parties (and we have tried to demonstrate in previous articles that they are differences of emphasis and not of principle) what is clear in the programmes of both parties is that the people will still have no voice in their affairs; that the existing political and economic machine will go on determining our 'values' and our 'objectives' which thoughtful, radical people this past century have invariably condemned as inhuman, unjust as well as wasteful of human energy and resources.



Above, the Labour Party's Harold Wilson overturned the Tories with a slim majority in 1964; below left, a Ladbrokes employee chalking up odds on the 1964 election results.

According to all three parties the panacea for a 'New Britain' is contained in the magic 'four per cent' growth in production each year. Yet it is, as a writer put it in last week's *Observer*, not on "an ideological escape hatch for politicians of all parties" but that "growth-manship is the cult of making everybody better off without affecting the structure of society". These words of wisdom were, surprisingly enough, penned by Sir Jock Campbell, head of the huge trading concern, the Booker Group, who, if we understand him correctly, has penetrated the smoke-screen of wealth and status to discover that the values of today are all wrong, artificial and do not fulfil the individual.

Now while it is probably true that there are few tycoons thinking along the lines of Sir Jock Campbell, and fewer still who will give up their wealth and power to seek to put into practice their social beliefs, we believe that in the years that lie ahead we shall see the beginnings of a new social conscience among the growing number of people who have achieved affluence and status in society only to discover that in so doing they have lost, or are denied, values which money cannot buy, which governments cannot legislate for however well intentioned and without which affluence, prosperity, material success are empty achievements.

"The fundamental difference between the parties" Lord Attlee declared in St Pancras the other day, "is that the Conservatives believe everything must be worked for profit, and Labour believe in service for the community". If the distinctions were true,

then it is difficult to understand why Labour should not win the present contest hands down, or why the Conservatives handsomely won the last three elections after the post-war landslide to Labour. It is more true to say, as the *Guardian* did (24th September) that "Only a minority of Labour Party members – and a tiny minority of supporters – want a fully socialist society. And only a small minority of Conservatives want to let the market rip". Or as Iain MacLeod wrote in the *Sun* (5th October): "All the parties and all their candidates long to see peace and prosperity, and any politician who pretends otherwise is a charlatan". Apart from the fact that no politician could ever hope to be elected if he preached war and poverty for the masses, capitalism in this age of technology and automation has adjusted to the idea of widespread prosperity without thereby abandoning the class structure of society which confers power, as well as greater prosperity, on a privileged minority. The possibilities are, and certainly this must be what the ruling classes hope for, that we shall in due course find ourselves living as well-fed contented cows without a care in the world or a rebellious thought in our heads.

We believe instead that the more affluent we become, the more education our children receive, the more leisure we will enjoy with automation, the more dissatisfied will we become with the values of the acquisitive society, and the more stifled by the regimentation and the dreariness of our daily lives.



## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## MAY

8th Working Class Bookfair, from 11am until 5pm at Museum Vaults, 33 Silkworth Row, Sunderland, call 07931201901 or see <http://workingclassbookfair.vpweb.com>  
 10th Shut down Heckler & Koch, meet at 4pm, Easter Park, Lenton Lane, Nottingham NG7 2PX for demo and picket of UK headquarter of this US arms corporation, followed by meeting at 7pm at the Sumac Centre, see <http://nottsantimilitarism.wordpress.com/heckler-koch> for details.

12th to 15th Sheffield Temporary Autonomous Arts, free open access and DIY event to encourage community and self-expression, contact [artandsoukcollective@hotmail.com](mailto:artandsoukcollective@hotmail.com) or 07798 884131 or see [randomartists.org](http://randomartists.org) or [asksheffield.org](http://asksheffield.org) for details.

15th Climate emergency overnight vigil, assemble outside St Martins in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, for midnight march down Whitehall to Old Palace Yard with events through the night, for further details call 020 7833 9311, email [info@campaigncc.org](mailto:info@campaigncc.org) or see [campaigncc.org](http://campaigncc.org)

15th No Borders day of action for freedom of movement, meet at 2pm at Jaurés metro station, Line 2, 1 Avenue Jean-Jaurés, Arrondissement 10th, Paris, see <http://parisactionday.wordpress.com> for details.

15th Party at the Pumps... this time it's Shell! Mass action call out, meet 1pm at Oxford Circus, bring a zone 1-2 tube pass, noisemakers, your friends and family and your dancing shoes, see [facebook.com/event.php?id=112331352138187](http://facebook.com/event.php?id=112331352138187) or <http://london.indymedia.org.uk/events/4683>

22nd Sheffield's first anarchist bookfair from 10am until 4pm at the Corporation night club, Milton Street, Sheffield S1 4JU and followed by a social in the evening, for details see <http://yorks-afed.org>

22nd Indymedia: ten years in the UK, a grand party to celebrate 10 years of reporting resistance with workshops, films and other social pleasantries starting at 4pm, then from 8pm music from Headjam, Anarchistwood, Beast of No Nation, Radio Revolution and more, and from 11pm assorted DJs will keep the party going until dawn, see <http://london.indymedia.org/events/4663>

29th London Zine Symposium, bringing together zine, small press, comic and radical writers at The Rag Factory, 16-18 Heneage Street, London E1 5LJ from 12 noon until 6pm, for further details see [londonzinesymposium.org.uk](http://londonzinesymposium.org.uk)

30th The far-right EDL are planning to march through Sheffield, see <http://yorks-afed.org> for details.

## JUNE

5th No Strawberry Fayre? Cambridgeshire police may think they have shut down one of the last free festivals in England, but let's show them otherwise - bring instruments, sound systems, friends, and assemble on Midsummer Common, Cambridge, email [classwarcambridgeshire@worker.com](mailto:classwarcambridgeshire@worker.com) or see [cambridgeanarchists.wordpress.com](http://cambridgeanarchists.wordpress.com)

## FILM

## A Minority Pastime - A letter to David Cameron

Directed by Michael Dixon

Named after David Cameron's description of fox hunting, *A Minority Pastime* is an introduction to the world of fox hunting seen through the eyes of Nisa Ward, a resident of Slad Valley who witnessed the cruelty herself, which led her to find out more about the activity.

Many items in the film are unlikely to surprise anyone familiar with the 'sport' or offer anything new to the converted, but the images and facts remain shocking nonetheless. The film is squarely aimed at those who are either unaware or blissfully ignorant of the facts of hunting, and as such is all the more effective for it, especially with the Election coming up and the Tories plan to repeal the hunt ban.

While there is focus on the mutilation of the animals and the innate violence shown towards other people and animals by those for whom such violence is fun, a lot of the film also covers some of the trespass, murder and damage done to private property which routinely occurs at the hands of the hunt mob. One person tells of how their pet cat, Molly, was ripped apart by hunting hounds that got into her garden, and a middle aged couple tell of how their property is invaded and damaged on average 15 times a year by hunters; which contrasts well with the more graphic and obscene stories, such as the stories of dogs impaled on garden fences in front of children, foxes ripped to pieces and the general disregard for life that the hunters show, to the foxes and their own hounds.

That said, the film is more than a series of individual events captured on camera, and it



does deserve credit for at least trying to show the hunters' side, despite being kicked out and barred from most of the meets. There are also moments of unintentional humour mixed in with the harrowing footage, always at the hunters' expense. These moments are few and far between, however, and often show the reality of how hard it is to go against the likes of the Countryside Alliance.

Two moments, one showing a mob of hunt supporters attacking hunt sabs while the police arrive too late to take any action, and the experience of the film crew on their way out of a hunt meet, when they were stopped by five police cars who searched their vehicle and confiscated various items in case they were going to be 'obstructing lawful activity', showcase this brilliantly.

What the film manages to convey is that while the ban is in place, people are still hunting and the Police and those who make the laws are on the side of those with the money, which is always going to be the hunters and their supporters. And what also stands out is the sheer arrogance of a group who know they can do as they please regardless of the effect they have on others.

While the film may offer nothing new to those already well aware of the evil of fox hunting, for those not in the know this is essential viewing to help understand why so many people oppose this murder and why it will always be a minority who enjoy such a cruel pastime.

James Farrow

To find out if there is a screening near you, see [aminoritypastime.net/](http://aminoritypastime.net/)

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The revolutionary greeting of compañero or compañera, used by the Spanish anarchists, which means companion, originally meant to share a meal, coming from the Latin for 'with bread'.
2. The term comrade, used in Marxist and union circles, as well as some anarchist ones, originates from the Spanish term camarada, originally meaning 'chamber mate'.
3. Replying to a black journalist at a press conference, he said "I understand the concern of your people. But if you keep off the streets of London and behave yourselves you won't have the SPG to worry about."
4. Virtually none. Only ballboys and ballgirls at the tennis at Wimbledon will be allowed to be that young. Apparently it's because of child protection laws.



# Art you can bank on

This entertaining pseudo-documentary mocks contemporary art's commercial premises as well as the mystique of individual genius — Tom Jennings laughs at, and with, Banksy.

Banksy's *Barely Legal* LA show (2006) saturated big-dollar red dots across his defaced Old Master prints and other hacked-up adbuster *detournements* travestying the kudos of high-cultural originality. This triumphant tapeworm entryism into the postmodern cocktail-party canon coexists with continuing illegal grass-roots graffitiism, which similarly cannily exploits a more downmarket and less aesthetically supercilious populist sentimentality poking fun at po-faced guardians of public space and taste and their military-corporate complexes. But taken together these exploits also exemplify the ruthless guerilla marketing tactics preferred by cool late-capitalist brand operations, and his new film *Exit Through the Gift Shop* lays bare these (and more) connections with unexpected subtlety and force. Its conceit is to focus on the career of amiable French emigré Thierry Guetta, a Hollywood second-hand clothes shopkeeper whose obsessive home-videos contain unique nuggets of prominent street artists at work — thanks to testimonials from his cousin Invader whom he accompanied around nocturnal Paris.

Connecting in California with Shephard Fairey (of Soviet propaganda-style 'Obey' and Obama's 'Hope' fame) led to Guetta's stint shadowing Banksy on the pretext of finishing his film history of street art. The first edit being — so we're told — completely incompetent, Banksy sequesters his archive and suggests he tries his hand at an art exhibition capitalising on the 'Mr Brainwash' (MBW) camerahead stencils already plastered round the town. However, the prodigious output Guetta extracts from his hired artists is as witless as the attempt at a film — though his famous friends still provide promotional (anti-) endorsements ("Mr Brainwash is a force of nature; he's a phenomenon. And I don't mean that in a good way") leading to *LA Weekly* front cover hype. So the derivative sub-Warholian dross in *Life is Beautiful* (2008), held in the disused Hollywood CBS TV studios, is wildly successful — prompting a Marilyn pastiche commission for Madonna's greatest hits album design and further big-selling shows. Unsurprisingly, conspiracy theory blogslackers had field days speculating on the real deals behind MBW, Banksy, and now this film.



Ironically, Tamra Davis's biographical *Jean-Michel Basquiat: the Radiant Child* — covering early hip-hop graffitists in 1980s Manhattan — premiered at the same Sundance festival as our non-history of street art. Neither the massive first-wave underground nor its fêted exponents are mentioned — only current practitioners legitimised by artworld chitchat; significant omissions including Blek le Rat, the French maestro who Banksy elsewhere acknowledges accomplished most of his good ideas first, and London's King Robbo with whom he enjoys ongoing adolescent bragging-rights tagging-feuds. Honest humility clearly has limits in a cinematic vanity-piece. But it does effectively counter the official culture industry's imperialising incorporation of global street-art, showcased in major US and UK shows *Beautiful Losers* (2004) and *Spank the Monkey* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 16th December 2006) and Tate Modern's belated lazy gesture *Street Art* (2008; whose corporate sponsorship Banksy shunned). These falsify the messy conflictual roots of the phenomenon in unruly resistance to urban alienation in favour of seamless bootstrap narratives of talented scum rising to the top — and such miserable cultural-capitalist fantasies *Exit* ecstatically debunks.

## Bamboozling contemporary art

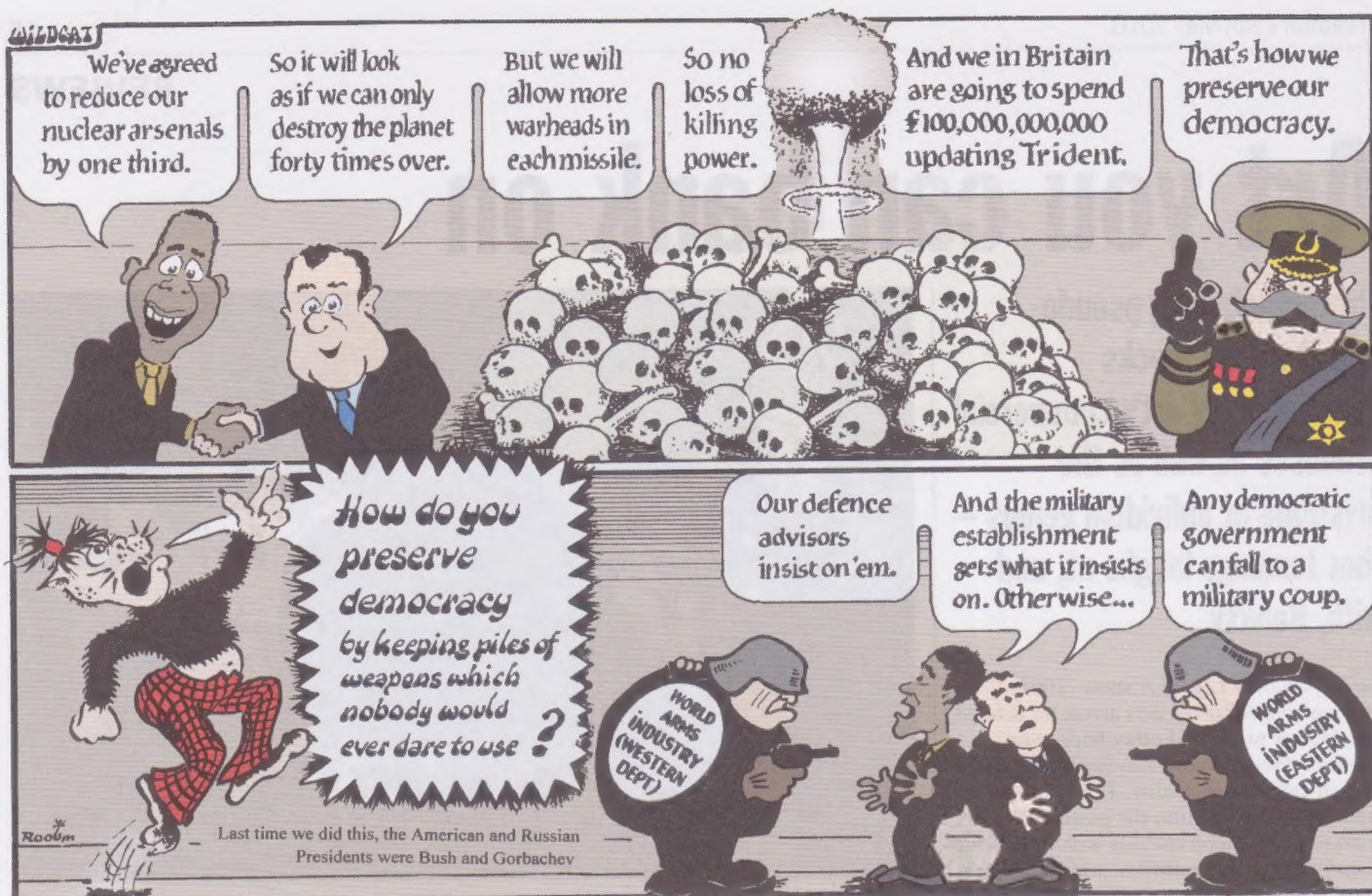
However, if its rationale is a thoroughgoing set-up, with the McGuffin of Mr Brainwash conceptually and materially orchestrated by Banksy, then it proves the abject surrender of modern art's market, media and audience to superficial PR as well as the vulnerability of latterday documentary storytelling and authorial objectivity and integrity to similar corruption. More interestingly, if not purely a scam — taking at face value Banksy's self-deprecating reflections on the struggle for expression and the painstaking melding of

craft and imagination — it represents a case study of the voluntary (self-)recuperation of cultural oppositionality. Either way the film is still vastly more intelligent and illuminating than recent dreary telly documentaries about contemporary art — not to mention Duncan Ward's pathetic *Boogie Woogie*, purportedly a cinematic fiction satirising the Hoxton scene of bright young things moving, shaking and networking but actually a vapid retread of 80s yuppie self-congratulation strewn with artworld name-dropping by A-list actors.

So dismissals of Banksy as a sellout betraying street art's gift ethos smell suspiciously of hypocritical bad faith, just as simpering fandom recycles uncritical celebrity-worship — his trademark anonymity facilitating narcissistic transference in positive or negative ego-maniac directions while undercutting the protofascistic constellation of a star's charisma. And, after all, Basquiat and Keith Haring also entered NY galleries, albeit not making obscene bucketloads of dosh — so perhaps, here, mere underdog petit-bourgeois rivalry is at stake, whereupon the exchange-value of commodified creation still rules despite different scales and registers. Specific practical reactions by 'alternative' art groups thus restrict their peremptory contempt to partial critique — clearly unequal to the comprehensive demolition of pretension and disarmingly mendacious self-effacement that the film demonstrates. Nevertheless, spoofs of the brand inflation and bogus authenticity often hit home hard on the hater's funny bone — like 'the ephemeral one project' (<http://notbanksy.co.uk>; aping the 'genuine' [www.banksy.co.uk](http://www.banksy.co.uk)) flogging explicit fakes dead cheap on the internet loss-led by freebies scattered on London streets.

But Banksy's embrace of the YBA commercial bubble can also be read in terms of the





## Review

### « page 15

cultural-political tactic of 'over-identification' – hidden, contradictory undersides of mainstream phenomena being highlighted by faithful simulations exaggerating and attenuating signature characteristics.\* This might explain why responses within and to this film run the gamut of elite and popular positions regarding the general role of artists in modern society and its spectacular show-business. A measure of success might be the critics' inability to understand it without undermining their own privileged discourses while exposing sundry regressive prejudices – predictably, ignoring the insistent questioning of graffiti as vandalism, outlaw uses of space, and 'proper' processes of art's provenance,

display, dissemination and institutional gate-keeping. That Banksy is immune to none of the criticisms he attracts may therefore be *Exit's* most eloquent point – if conveniently and comedically displaced onto his neo-pop French patsy. Yet the escalating ironies in evidence never yield the cynical detachment of either the establishment or its loyal radical opposition – although Banksy wryly admits that he no longer encourages everyone to try doing art, creativity's potentially subversive power still somehow shines through his deconstruction.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)  
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

\* See, for example, BAVO's useful discussion in 'Cultural Activism Today' ([www.bavo.biz](http://www.bavo.biz)), and Stephen Shukaitis on Slovenian post-punk outfit Laibach in *Variant* 37 magazine ([variant.org.uk](http://variant.org.uk)).

## THE QUIZ

1. Who, in anarchist terms might you share a meal with?
2. And why, in terms of historic class struggle, might you have shared a room with someone?
3. What did Metropolitan police commissioner Sir David MacNee say after his men killed Blair Peach?
4. One of the chief justifications for the London Olympics is to promote sport to young people. How many people under 18 will be able to volunteer at the Games?

Answers on page 14

The *Anarchist Quiz Book* compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available at £5 (post free) from [freedompress.org.uk](http://freedompress.org.uk).

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Above: Comrade Eyjafjallajökull; below left, composite map of the ash plume spanning 14th to 25th April

lost in a maze of cost cutting: unfair redundancies, lower paid staff, excessive charges, no customer service. Airlines are also infamous for their lack of social consciousness, limiting airport expansion and addressing carbon emissions cut into an ever-elusive profit margin. However, cost cutting can only go so far. Historically airlines have been kept somewhat in check by government regulations, the cost of plane crashes, and passengers' fear of sudden fiery death.

Up until Eyjafjallajökull's amply predicted eruption, passengers were assured that while airlines may cut baggage, meals, and padded seats; elected officials would ensure that 'the skies are safe'. Not surprisingly, these policies focused not on airlines but on controlling the passengers, manifested in increasingly invasive 'security' measures, rapidly eroding individual rights both in and outside of airports. Airlines are incentivised to keep their planes compliant with maintenance regulations, not necessarily to avert a loss of human life;

crashes are fantastically expensive. The initial search for remains of Air France flight 447, which mysteriously crashed in the Pacific last July killing all aboard, cost £34 million and many times that has been spent on ongoing legal fees. Of greater worry to airlines is the psychological impact plane crashes have on consumers. Airlines put on a face of utmost concern for safety as passengers who are afraid to fly cannot be monetised. Of course, what airlines truly care about is money: an explanation of Air France 447's catastrophic crash was never officially determined. However, Air France has been accused of using obsolete sensors that were recommended – but not mandated – for upgrade. Passengers, once on an airplane, are completely helpless when the airline decides that profit comes before people.

So what happened when siliceous volcanic ash blanketed Europe's prime airspace? How did the commercial airlines gain control of the skies in under a week? Grounding the

UK air fleet laid bare the instability of our economy grossly based on air transport. Half a million people were stranded, Kenyan crops grown for export rotted (while 1.6 million Kenyans went hungry). Hotels and trains profiteered on passengers' desperate need to find shelter and reunite with their families. Bosses panicked and politicians pointed fingers at each other. Starting with BA, KLM, easy jet and Virgin Atlantic, airlines demanded autonomous power to decide if their aircraft were safe to fly or not. And they exercised this new power by sending up test flights, and widely disseminating in the media that results from these tests proved the ash presented no threat. These dubious tests – commercial aircraft have no sensors for volcanic ash – hardly count as thorough scientific enquiry. A few days of randomly sampling flights is simply not enough when hard evidence points to past damage and near crashes due to ash.

Very few standard air safety tests were done in the aftermath of Eyjafjallajökull: the